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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [PTER](#) [CO](#)
SUBJECT: JOINT CHIEFS CHAIRMAN GENERAL PACE MEETS WITH VICE
PRESIDENT SANTOS

REF: BOGOTA 418

Classified By: Ambassador William B. Wood
Reasons: 1.4 (b) and (d)

Summary

¶1. (C) In a one-hour meeting with CJCS General Peter Pace on January 19, Vice President Francisco Santos urged continued U.S. Congressional support for the fight against FARC terrorists. Santos said the GOC supported spraying but also sought new strategies. He cautioned that Ecuador's President Correa could be a greater challenge for Colombia than Venezuela's President Chavez. General Pace thanked the GOC for sharing its expertise with Afghanistan. End Summary.

¶2. (U) On January 19, CJCS General Pace met with Vice President Santos. Pace was accompanied by Ambassador William Wood, Defense Attache Rey Velez, CJCS Executive Assistant David Teeples, and poloff (notetaker). COLMIL Armed Forces Commander, General Freddy Padilla, accompanied Vice President Santos.

COUNTERTERROR: Intensified Effort Against FARC

¶3. (C) Santos opened by saying it was time for both countries to "push the pedal to the metal" in the final fight against the FARC guerrillas. Colombia could see the "light at the end of the tunnel." The GOC would increase its efforts against the FARC, with a focus on liberating hostages and targeting enemy leaders. Santos said the FARC was expanding into Mexico, Bolivia, and Paraguay. Voicing concern about continued U.S. Congressional support due to competing commitments elsewhere, he urged the U.S. to maintain focus in Latin America and finish off the FARC. General Pace praised the GOC for its viable plan to end the conflict, a goal inconceivable a few years ago. He assured Santos the GOC had earned broad U.S. support through its progress on human rights and counterterrorism.

COUNTERDRUG: Seeking New Ideas

¶4. (C) While assuring GOC support for ongoing eradication, the Vice President also sought to stimulate new approaches in

the fight against coca cultivation. He said the Colombian public was expressing "war fatigue" from the lack of sustained changes in indicators such as street price and quality of drugs. The GOC was under pressure to develop new strategies beyond the "stopgap" of aerial spraying. As an example, Santos proposed a pilot project in the southwest department of Narino, where the GOC would focus military assets, eradication resources, and social services for an entire year, starving narcotraffickers of revenue and enabling alternative economic development. Ambassador Wood stressed that high levels of criminality among multiple armed groups made Narino an exceptionally tough area in which to operate, but he noted conversations were underway to dedicate more counterdrug assets to the southwest.

REGIONAL CRIME: Transferring Colombian Success

15. (C) Santos raised the issue of criminality in Latin America, saying that delinquency and kidnapping often linked to drugs had reached a point of crisis. Neighboring countries were "losing their streets," he said, and seeking GOC guidance on law enforcement. Santos noted the experience of sharing Colombian police training with Paraguay, where kidnappings were successfully brought under control (reftel). Linking law enforcement to political stability, Santos said, "We are fighting for the soul of Latin America," and the way to win was to help governments get the upper hand on security. General Pace agreed Colombia had much to teach other countries; moreover, self-sufficiency in local law enforcement lightened the load on the international community. The Ambassador stressed the U.S. was committed to making Colombia a success so that it could export its model

of a civilized response to threats.

LATIN LEFT: VP Warns on Correa and Chavez

16. (S) Asked about Venezuela, General Pace said Hugo Chavez continued to consolidate power and posed a long-term challenge for both the USG and GOC. Santos stressed that Chavez was at risk economically, having increased inflation and deficits and facing serious cash flow problems if oil fell below \$40 a barrel. Santos' main concern was on education: if Chavez began political indoctrination, "we are in trouble... for generations to come." The Vice President saw Ecuador's Rafael Correa as even a greater worry than Chavez -- "a lot smarter and more prepared... crazier but more structured." Correa, he predicted, would shirk all agreements, including the recent one with the GOC on spraying. On the air base at Manta, the Ambassador noted mutual interest in moving operations to Colombia but said it was premature to discuss a location.

AFGHANISTAN: U.S Appreciates GOC Expertise

17. (C) Santos reiterated GOC willingness to assist, saying "We are in this fight together." General Pace relayed President Karzai's thanks to President Uribe for Colombian advisory teams. Agreeing that Colombia's military was fully engaged at home, the Chairman said the U.S. needed the GOC's expertise, not its troops. Given the two countries' parallel terrorist threats, said Pace, Colombia was uniquely able to assist Afghanistan. Any GOC outreach would be helpful and welcome.

18. (U) This message was cleared by OCJCS staff.
WOOD